

## A-8. Additional Guidance - Animal Welfare

### Purpose

This document aims to provide additional guidance and clarification for farmers and workers at the farm level in determining compliance with the Regenerative Organic Certified® Framework and Dairy Animal Welfare Criteria.

The Animal Welfare pillar seeks to ensure humane practices in the raising and/or handling of animals that intend to be sold or marketed using Regenerative Organic Certified® claims.

### Scope and Applicability

This document applies to all applicants and certified operators against the Regenerative Organic Certified® Framework and the Dairy Animal Welfare Framework, if applicable.

### Animal Welfare

1.1 Existing Certifications	
<b>Practice Description</b>	<p>All livestock products intended to be sold with a Regenerative Organic Certified® claim must have proof of existing USDA Organic certification or recognized equivalent for livestock.</p> <p>Operation has proof of existing animal welfare certification recognized under the Regenerative Organic Certified®, as applicable to the operation being certified.</p> <p>*Dairies are exempt from holding an existing animal welfare certification provided all applicable criteria within the dairy-specific module are met and verified at Regenerative Organic Certified® audit.</p>
<b>Additional Guidance</b>	<p>To be eligible for the Regenerative Organic Certified® program, livestock operations* are required to hold one of the following animal welfare certifications for each type of farm animal(s) raised on-site:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Animal Welfare Approved by A Greener World, or</li> <li>• Global Animal Partnership Step 4, 5, or 5+, or</li> <li>• Certified Humane** (Humane Farm Animal Care)</li> </ul>

	<p>Livestock operations must meet the animal welfare pillar in the Regenerative Organic Certified® Framework, including any Regenerative Organic Certified® criteria that are not met by the certifications listed above. The additional Regenerative Organic Certified® criteria required for each animal welfare certification are provided in the Required Baseline Certifications &amp; Equivalency Assessment. The equivalency assessment represents the criteria needed to earn Regenerative Organic Certified® Bronze. For Silver or Gold level, please refer to the full Regenerative Organic Certified® Framework.</p> <p>*Dairies, at the bronze level, are exempt from holding an existing animal welfare certification provided all applicable criteria within the Dairy Animal Welfare specific module are met and verified at Regenerative Organic Certified® audit. In countries where none of the recognized third-party animal welfare certifications operate; dairy operations can be certified at only the Bronze level if the operation meets all applicable criteria within the Dairy Animal Welfare and the Animal Welfare pillar.</p> <p>**Certified Humane laying hen operations must meet the Certified Humane standards for Seasonal Pasture Raised or Pasture Raised as outlined in Part 4: A &amp; B of the Humane Farm Animal Care (February 1, 2018) Animal Care Standards for Egg Laying Hens. Laying hen operations that only meet the baseline requirements (no outdoor access) or Free-Range standards of the Certified Humane certification are not eligible for the Regenerative Organic Certified® program.</p>
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1.4 Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation	
<b>Practice Description</b>	<p>Operation does not feed animals in a manner that meets the EPA's definition of a CAFO: "A lot or facility (other than an aquatic animal production facility) where animals have been, are, or will be stabled or confined and fed or maintained for a total of 45 days or more in any 12-month period, and crops, vegetation, forage growth, or postharvest residues are not sustained in the normal growing season over any portion of the lot or facility. The EPA provides specific thresholds by animal sector for small, medium, and large CAFOs. For example, a large CAFO for beef cattle is defined as 1,000 or more "animal units" confined for over 45 days a year."</p> <p>Exemptions may be granted to operations with more than 1,000 animal units that demonstrate ample pasture access and utilization. Such cases will be evaluated on an individual basis.</p>
<b>Additional Guidance</b>	To improve clarity, a simplified description of the types of operations that qualify for certification is provided:

	“Operation does not feed animals in a manner that meets the EPA’s definition of a CAFO. <u>Exemptions may be granted to operations that demonstrate ample pasture access and utilization.</u> Such cases will be evaluated on an individual basis.”
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3.1 General	
<b>Practice Description</b>	<p><b>CURRENT FRAMEWORK LANGUAGE</b></p> <p>For meat chickens, breeds must be selected to demonstrate higher welfare outcomes and have genetic growth potential of no more than .12 lbs. (55g) per day.</p> <p><b>FRAMEWORK UPDATE</b></p> <p>For meat chickens, breeds must either pass a recognized welfare assessment (RSPCA broiler breed welfare assessment, G.A.P.’s broiler chicken assessment protocol) OR have genetic growth potential of no more than .10 lbs. (45g) per day when fed a non-nutrient-limiting diet.</p>
<b>Additional Guidance</b>	<p>All breeds must demonstrate better welfare outcomes throughout their lives on pasture, with low flock mortality and cull rates, good walking ability, and a low incidence of hock and footpad lesions.</p> <p>The mortality and cull rates of each flock are recorded for the first seven days (day 0-6) and separately from day 7 until slaughter. The annual mortality and cull rates from day 7 until slaughter should not exceed 6%, excluding losses or culls from predation. Any chicken that is unable to reach food or water due to illness, injury, lameness, or poor growth (runt) must be promptly culled using an approved method of euthanasia. The bird loss will be reflected in the flock’s cull rate.</p> <p>Chickens brooded indoors from one week of age are provided with natural daylight, dry and friable litter, and forage and perching enrichments. These encourage the chickens to be active at a young age, support healthy leg development, maintain good walking ability, and avoid lameness when older and outdoors on pasture.</p> <p><b>Bronze:</b> Broiler chickens spend at least 51% of their lives in fully enclosed, covered mobile coops on pasture, that is at least 51% rooted vegetation.</p> <p><b>Silver:</b> Broiler chickens spend more than 51% of their lives on pasture that is at least 51% rooted vegetation. During daylight hours, chickens can range freely on uncovered pasture outside of covered houses or mobile coops through exits from their housing units. They can be moved back into housing units at night for protection from predators.</p> <p>Uncovered pasture must have areas of natural or artificial cover distributed throughout the uncovered pasture to encourage the chickens to range. Sheltered or shaded areas throughout the uncovered pasture will provide the chickens with different places to retreat when real or</p>

	<p>perceived aerial predators, such as birds of prey or airplanes, are overhead. Cover also gives the chickens shade from the sun and shelter from wind and rain to allow the chickens to range more often.</p> <p><b>Gold:</b> Broiler chickens must spend over 2/3 (66%) of their lives on uncovered pasture that is at least 75% rooted vegetation. During the day, they range on uncovered pasture, moving to their housing units at night for protection from predators.</p> <p>The uncovered pasture outside of housing/coops must have outdoor cover distributed throughout the uncovered pasture to encourage the chickens to range. A proportion of the outdoor cover must be provided by natural sources, such as perennial trees or shrubs, or annual crops that grow to a height and/or density to provide the chickens with protective cover.</p> <p>If a producer needs to remove birds from pasture access (specific to its program level) for more than 30 days to minimize the risk of disease outbreak, they must document the decision and notify the ROA immediately. When contacting the ROA, the producer must provide a contingency plan that details how the birds will be managed indoors for an extended period, including the space available per bird, the availability of foraging, scratch, and other enrichment materials, and the criteria that must be met to return the birds to their specific program-level of pasture access.</p>
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3.2 Indoor Shelter & 3.3 Confinement	
Practice Description	<p><b>3.2 Indoor Shelter</b></p> <p>Animals are provided with shelter adequate for their physical and behavioral needs. Shelter for animals and birds may be provided by natural features such as shade, trees, or by buildings. Housing may also be used as shelter. In extreme weather there must be a means to feed and water animals in a sheltered environment</p> <p>Tie-Stall Barns: Tie-stall barns are not permitted for permanent housing; see exceptions for Bronze.</p> <p><b>Bronze:</b> Dairies are allowed a two-year period to transition to a free stall or complete pasture-based operation.</p>
	<p><b>3.3 Confinement</b></p> <p>Operations do not use any type of permanent confinement that restricts mobility, and livestock live, eat, and sleep outdoors the majority of the time in alignment with the principles of the Five Freedoms.</p>

	<p>There shall be continuous and open access to pasture.</p> <p>Temporary confinement may be used only when necessary and must be in alignment with Regenerative Organic Alliance (ROA)-approved baseline Animal Welfare standards.</p>
<b>Additional Guidance</b>	<p><b>For the Silver and Gold levels, temporary close confinement of dairy animals, including cows and calves***, by tying up or restraint will be limited to no more than 5 hours within a 24-hour period.</b></p> <p>Temporary close confinement via tying up or restraint (stanchions) that may be required for vaccination, veterinary procedures, weighing, washing, marking, milking, feeding <u>immediately</u> pre- or post-milking, or while awaiting transport, is permitted. This must be noted in the farm plan or recorded at the time of temporary confinement.</p> <p>***For Silver-level dairies, the outlined forms of calf group housing in 3.3 criteria are not considered a type of restraint, so the time limit listed above does not apply.</p> <p><b>Individual Calf Hutches:</b> Individual calf hutches are not permitted; see below applicability for each level:  <b>Bronze:</b> Dairies are allowed a two-year transitional period to phase out individual hutches. Single animals born with no pen mates of similar size/age can be separated in a sub-pen in an existing group pen or a calf hutch immediately adjacent to the group pen for up to three weeks.  <b>Silver:</b> Dairies must provide group pens for 3 to 8 calves for the entire calf-rearing operation. Single animals born with no pen mates of similar size/age can be separated in a sub-pen in an existing group pen or a calf hutch immediately adjacent to the group pen for up to three weeks.  <b>Gold:</b> Heifer calves remain paired with the mother cow until fully weaned and remain with the herd on pasture.</p>

<b>4.2 Physical Modifications</b>	
<b>Practice Description</b>	<p>Operations do not abuse animals or treat animals with cruelty and do not use the practices listed below. Exceptions to these prohibited practices must be in alignment with the Regenerative Organic Certified® required baseline Animal Welfare standards.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beak Trimming / De -Beaking</li> </ul>
<b>Additional Guidance</b>	<p>Regenerative Organic Certified® poultry operations should avoid the use of routine beak trimming/de-beaking. Poultry producers should use environmental interventions to reduce the incidence of injurious feather pecking, including, but not limited to early access to forage and range,</p>

	<p>mash feeding, providing areas of refuge for subordinate birds, and having matching housing conditions during pullet rearing and lay for laying hens.</p> <p>Infrared beak trimming of chicks immediately after hatch may be permitted on a case-by-case basis. Hot or cold blade trimming is not a permitted method. Only infrared beak trimming is recommended at hatch and not to be applied beyond 10 days of age.</p> <p>Exemptions may be granted, and additional documentation is required. The operation(s) covered under the certificate are required to show evidence that different environmental interventions have been repeatedly unsuccessful in reducing severe feather pecking damage in their flocks. Individual operations are subject to regular review by ROA and may be withdrawn for future flocks in favor of new alternative environmental interventions.</p>
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4.3 Disposition of Culled Animals – Specific to Dairy Animal Welfare Criteria	
<b>Practice Description</b>	<p>Culled animals, such as dairy bull calves, shall not be sent to a standard livestock auction. If no other viable alternative outlined at right is available, on-farm euthanasia shall be done in accordance with Criteria 5.1.</p> <p><b>Bronze:</b> Dairy bull calves are sold to an operation with a ROA-approved AW certification and/or a nearby certified pasture-based operation</p> <p><b>Silver:</b> Dairy bull calves are sold to a certified organic operation to be raised to maturity</p> <p><b>Gold:</b> Dairy bull calves are raised on site to maturity or sold to another Regenerative Organic Certified® farm to be raised to maturity</p>
<b>Additional Guidance</b>	<p><b>Criteria 4.3 <u>only</u> applies to dairy bull calves from dairy operations</b></p> <p>The 4.3 criteria for the Bronze and Silver levels have been revised to ensure consistent application across applicable dairy operators, and are now as follows:</p> <p><b>Bronze:</b> Dairy bull calves are sold to an operation with a Regenerative Organic Certified® approved AW certification and/or an organization that provides continuous access to pasture.</p> <p><b>Silver:</b> Dairy bull calves are sold to an operation providing continuous pasture access and raised to maturity.</p> <p><b>Gold:</b> Dairy bull calves are raised on site to maturity or sold to another Regenerative Organic Certified® farm to be raised to maturity.</p> <p><b>All other classes of dairy animals, including <u>cull cows</u>, that need to be treated, euthanized, or sent to slaughter are covered under the relevant sections:</b></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Criteria 4.1, 5.1, and all of sections 6, 7, &amp; 8 regarding humane treatment, euthanasia, transport, slaughter/killing, and personnel training in the Regenerative Organic Certified® Framework and the Dairy Animal Welfare Criteria.</li> </ul>
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## Terms and Definitions:

**Beak Trimming / De-Beaking:** The removal of all or a portion of a bird’s beak.

**Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO):** Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs), as defined by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), are lots or facilities (other than an aquatic animal production facility) where animals have been, are, or will be stabled or confined and fed or maintained for a total of 45 days or more in any 12-month period. Crops, vegetation, forage growth, or post-harvest residues are not sustained in the normal growing season over any portion of the lot or facility. The EPA provides specific thresholds by animal sector for small, medium, and large CAFOs. For example, a large CAFO for beef cattle is defined as 1,000 or more “animal units” confined for over 45 days a year.